SAHITYA AKADEMI AWARDS: BOOKS AND WRITERS (1955-1978)



Sahitya Akademi

SAHITYA AKADEMI

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

In the year 1955, the first Sahitya Akademi Awards were given to twelve Indian writers for their contribution to literature. Since then, the awards have become a regular annual feature; instead of twelve languages, they are now given to works in twenty-two and the award amount has risen from Rs. 5000 to Rs. 25,000.

The basic procedure for selecting works for the awards was devised when the Akademi was headed by such writers and statesmen as Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and Dr. Abul Kalam Azad. This procedure has not, however, been deemed inflexible and, over the years, attempts have been made to free the selection procedure further from any posssibility of deviation from the highest standards of excellence. The procedure as it now stands consists of a three-tier process of selection made by scholars, critics and other writers.

In the first twenty-five years of the Sahitya Akademi's existence, that is upto 1978, awards were given to 15 works in Assamese, 21 in Bengali; 8 in Dogri; 10 in English; 20 in Gujarati; 23 in Hindi; 22 in Kannada; 10 in Kashmiri; 2 in Konkani; 10 in Maithili; 20 in Malayalam; 5 in Manipuri; 23 in Marathi; 2 in Nepali; 18 in Oriya; 18 in Punjabi; 5 in Rajasthani; 11 in Sanskrit; 12 in Sindhi; 19 in Tamil; 18 in Telugu and 19 in Urdu.

The Advisory Board of each language commissioned a well-known literary scholar of that language to review each of these-311 titles; in spite of our most assiduous persuasions, nine reviews – one each in Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, and Marathi, two in Telugu and three in Manipuri were not received and could not unfortunately be included. The reviews which are published here were scrutinized by each language Advisory Board as a preliminary to publication. The editorial responsibility is, therefore, divided, in a symbolically significant way, amongst some leading literary figures in each of the languages of India.

We envisage this volume as the first of a series and we hope that it will serve a long felt need to present a consolidated picture of Sahitya Akademi's efforts in this area of our activities.

Indra Nath Choudhuri

FOREWORD

Thomas Mann, wnen awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1929 referred to the "misgiving" which any writer must feel when receiving an award. This feeling of misgiving is only strengthened if the award also happens to come from a National Body; there is a lurking suspicion that support from Government-funded bodies necessarily goes together with heavy-handed insistence on conformity. Nowhere is this suspicion more dramatically articulated then by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, writer and statesman, who in his capacity as the first President of the Sahitya Akademi said in the first meeting of the General Council in 1954, that he was "afraid of the heavy-hand of the Government" as it might "retard the growth of literature."

This sensitivity to the writer's need for freedom was shared in equal measure by his fellow-writers and statesmen. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, to whom credit should go for Governmental funding for Sahitya Akademi and the institution of the annual National Awards, described the Government's role as being limited to that of a "curtain-raiser". In like vein, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, first Vice-President of the Akademi, asserted: "If we are to have creative literature in our country and not managed literature, it is essential that the Akademi should remain completely autonomous... No great literature can be produced unless Men have the courage to be lonely in their minds to be free in their thoughts and to express whatever occurs to them. Freedom of human spirit is the first essential of any kind of creative literature. That must be protected."

This commitment to protect the freedom of the writer is a basic, guiding tenet of the Sahitya Akademi. Every year, while announcing and presenting the annual Awards, we remind ourselves of it, anew. Our awards were instituted in 1954 in order to recognize the great works of literature and to encourage writers in the different Indian languages. In doing this publicly, we also bring to the notice of discerning readers in other languages, the achievements of fellow Indian writers. Our programme of translating award-winning books is a further step in this direction.

The procedure for the selection of books for awards has evolved over the years. It has been reviewed as many as six times in order to make it more responsive to the claims of literary merit in its freest and fullest manifestation. The traditional manner in which the presentation is made – the presentation ceremony followed on the next day by a 'Writers' Meet', where writers describe their creative experiences – provides an invaluable forum for literary interaction; in sharp focus are the contours, the colours, the interweaving textures of that multilingual phenomenon we call Indian literature.

The present volume, bearing reviews of books that received national awards over the first twenty-five years of the Sahitya Akademi's existence, is a record of our commitment to identify works of excellence and honour writers of eminence. Its release coincides with a historic occasion in the life of this organisation: the first Translation Prize-giving ceremony of the Sahitya Akademi. It is our hope that both the Sahitya Akademi Awards and the Translation Prizes will continue to flourish and long serve to provide recognition and incentive to writers and translators in India.

B.K. Bhattacharyya

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ORIYA

1955 Award

Gopinath Mohanty

Amrutara Santan

Bharthi Bihar, Calcutta; 1949; 831 pp; Rs. 10.0.0.

Amrutara Santan is an epic which celebrates in fictional form the anguish and ecstasy, the joys and tragedies of the tribal world. The tribe in question is the Kondh tribe, the largest among the Orissan tribes, and one of the most primitive, tucked away in the inaccessible hills and jungles of the Eastern Ghats.

To say, this is in no way to suggest that it is an ethnographic novel. No doubt a vast wealth of cultural materials such as rituals, celebrations, death rites, the rite of naming a child, exorcising witches, etc. are there but they are only part of the grand design of the novel and are beautifully transmitted from dry data of ethnography to pulsating poetry through the integrative vision and superb craftsmanship of the author.

The principle characters of the novel are Diudu, the young *saonta* or village head man and Piyu, Diudu's wife. There are Pubuli, Diudu's younger sister and Diudu's uncle Lenju. The novel is about the lives of these people, their problems, their joys and their sorrows. It deals with marital relationships portrayed through Diudu and Piyu. Diudu is unfaithful, and slowly drifting away from her after her child birth, sickness and declining health, takes to another women, Pioti and finally brings her home. This forces Piyu to leave her husband. The characters in the novel are painted with a stark and living realism. This is true not only of the major ones but also of the minor characters.

The canvas of the novel is vast but it is an intimate world of a few villages interlinked through marital alliances; the focus, however, being on a few characters portrayed with vivid concreteness and complexity. The novelist paints pictures in words. The changing seasons of the tribal physical landscape, the rains, the spring, the autumn

and winter, the sunrise and sunset, the various occasions of ritual and religious festivities, are all portrayed so beautifully that one almost gets into both the physical, social and psychic world of Orissa and India's tribal world. It is indeed a remarkable work of fiction, certainly one of the finest Indian novels of all times.

Sitakant Mahapatra

1958 Award

Kanhucharan Mohanty

Ka

Sathi Prakashan, Cuttack; 1956; 280 pp.

> "Sri Kanhucharan Mohanty was born in 1906, at Sonepur in Bolangir district. He is a distinguished novelist and author of 26 books in Oriya."

Ka is based on the theme that the ultimate goal of a woman's life is motherhood. Nandika, the beautiful and beloved wife of Sunanda, a young business enterpreneur, is childless even after seven years of marriage. The mother-in-law Abhaya, in her bid to save the family lineage influences Sunanda for a second marriage. However, the irony of fate is such that Nandika herself becomes the mother of a son after her husband's second marriage. The story spins round Nandika and depicts many facets of her character as a loving spouse, a dutiful housewife, an obedient daughter-in-law, a tolerant co-wife, and above all as a woman languishing for a child.

Ka has a simple structure which develops linearly with just four blind bends–Nandika declared barren, Sunanda's second marriage with Lalita, Lalita compromising herself to be Nandika's dummy, and finally Nandika becoming a mother. Other minor characters also provoke Sunanda's desire for money, sex and parental love and provide contrastive backdrops to the actions and feelings of the main story and its four characters–Sunanda, Nandika, Lalita and Abhaya.

The novel is full of pathos and emotional appeal. The long awaited moment of happiness comes at the end, when Nandika delivers the child at her life's risk and the mother-in-law gets the news on her death bed. Kanhucharan's greatest achievement is that he secures sympathy of the readers for all his characters.

Khageswar Mahapatra

1961 Award

Godavaris Misra

Ardhasatabdir Odisa O Tanhire Mo Sthan

Grantha Mandir, Cuttack; 1958; 310 pp.; Rs. 4.75

> "Sri Pandit Godavaris Misra (1888-1956) was one of the pioneers of modern Oriya literature. Published posthumously in 1958, this autobiography is much more than a mere narrative of the author's personal life. It is no less an authentic account of the history and development of Orissa for half a century during which the author worked as a teacher, legislator, social reformer and patriot."

Ardhasatabdir Odisa O Tanhire Mo Sthan (Half-Century Orissa and My Place There), though an autobiography, does not give a complete account of Pandit Misra's life. But due to his sudden death in 1956, the work remained unfinished, and out of a projected forty-five chapters of the first part, he had completed only thirty-four chapters, and covered the period till about 1923.

The book has two aspects. One relates to the first three decades of the twentieth century, and the changing socio-political situations. The second aspect refers to the writer's role in that background. In addition, there are accounts of the writer's own growth beginning with his early years at Banpur through educational years at Puri, Cuttack and Calcutta to his teachership in the famous Satyabadi National School at Sakhigopal, near Puri, which he left in 1919 to move over to Singbhum district for teaching and Congress work. Finally he returned to Banpur in 1922 to rest and prepare for the future. Thus the book is both an autobiographical account of Pandit Misra, though incomplete, as well as a graphic account of times,

persons and personalities. The narrative is not strictly chronological. The past has been seen as a totality from a point of time in future, which is 1951 and subsequent years till 1956 in this case. Thus there are continuous movements between the past and the present as well as moods and emotions, and the structure is both narrative and discursive with a fair sprinkling of contemplative observation. In addition, there are subtle shreds of humour as well as irony, and a keen desire to see things not only as they are but detached from the sentimental implications as related, to one's own individual self. These together with the fine use of colloquial language have made it both entertaining and serious and at the same time highly satisfying.

Jatindra Mohan Mohanty

1963 Award

Sachi Raut Roy

Kabita–1962

Grantha Mandir, Cuttack; 1962; 304 pp.; Rs. 12.00

> "Sachi Raut Roy (b. 1916) is one of the leading poets in Oriya, who has made significant contribution to the development of creative literature in his language. In aspiration as well as in technique his poetry voices the passion of a rebel. He has published many volumes of verse and was awarded Padmashree by the Government of India in 1962.
>
> The Award book *Kabita–1962* is the latest collection of his poems embodying his experiments with the new style and technique of expressing the contemporary reality. The work also includes an extensive introduction to the movement of new poetry in Oriya and other languages."

Kabita–1962 contains fifty-five poems, besides a long post-script in prose on the background and nature of 'new poetry'. It is an important book as it contains some of the best poems of Raut Roy, particularly related to his own new-romantic themes about nature and social

concern. The romantic-revolutionary Raut Roy of the earlier volumes was replaced by a Raut Roy who then became painfully aware of the impact of the contemporary life on the individual and expressed this awareness with honesty, and through the use of carefully chosen images which acted as a sort of objective correlative of that awareness.

In *Kabita–1962*, modern theme has been consolidated with a matching structure of images and rhythms. A good instance is the poem "Swagat Eka" :

But all these obstacles and impediments
this hill of inevitable sadness,
are playthings for that desire,
Hence are my thighs broken
and my rifle falls, and my hands
are too weak to pick up the Gandiba bow.
Oh, the white wounds of my battle!
Give me peace, give me sleep,
and draw up the tent of your love.

The desiccation, fragmentation and sense of impotence that characterise the consciousness of the individual self under the pressures and strains of modern living have also found powerful expression in his poems such as "Bhagna Nayak" (The Defeated Hero), "Nianre Chaliba" (To Walk on Fire), "Drust" (The Vision), "Antarala" (The Inner View), "Sri Gundicha" (Car Festival Day), "Antariksha" (The Firmament), "Simanta Train" (The Border-Train) and "Uttarasuri" (Successors). The use of the consciousness of death in *Kabita–1962*, is something new in Raut Roy's own poetic career. For example, the poem "Ghara" (Hope) :

But one day that complex hand
will pounce upon us, and this hard door
will break, the lights will be switched off.
That hand will embezzle my sure universe
and will disappear in a moment;
It is that Death–some call it Eternity–
Alas ! Alas ! that Black, Dreadful Cat !

Yet the strident rhetoric that characterized his earlier social poems is absent in poems of a similar kind in *Kabita–1962* and in its place

we find a quiet and amused tone of irony that captures the paradoxes inherent in the life around us.

Finally it must be said that most of the poems of *Kabita–1962* are impressive achievements which consolidate his reputation as the pioneer modern poet in post-Independence Oriya poetry, and it is no exaggeration to say that the colourful and varied Oriya poetry of the 1960s and 70s gathered no mean strength from *Kabita–1962*.

Prafulla K. Jagadeb

1964 Award

Nilakantha Das

Atmajibani

Cuttack Students Store, Cuttack; 1963; 301 pp.; Rs. 8.00

"Pt. Nilakantha Das (b. 1984) is a distinguished Oriya author, patriot and social worker. After obtaining his Master's degree from the University of Calcutta, Sri Das started the open-air Satyabadi High School in 1911. Later on, he joined the national movement for freedom and served prison sentences in 1922, 1930 and 1933. He was afterwards elected to the Central Legislative Assembly and was its member up to 1945. In 1947 he was elected as the Speaker of the Orissa State Assembly. He has been intimately associated with several cultural associations besides being the Pro-Chancellor of the Utkal University and Head of the Utkal Sahitya Akademi. In his long and chequered career, Sri Nilakantha Das has written a number of books on a wide variety of subjects including books for children.

The Award book, *Atmajibani*, is the autobiography of this grand old man of Oriya literature and vividly describes the cultural and political events in Orissa for more than half a century. For its authentic record of the times, its charming style and lucidity of expression, it has been hailed as an outstanding contribution to contemporary Oriya literature."

The autobiography of Pandit Nilakantha Das is a faithful expression of multifaceted reactions of a mind sensitive to the situations which form the nexus of one's contemporary world. Das makes an authentic record of the conflict between his self within, and facts without. This conflict, while crystallizing Das's attitude towards himself, focuses attention on his art and society. He maintains an objective distance between committed fidelity to self, feelings and passions and his involvement with the social milieu in which he deeply lived.

Though not in a strict chronological order *Atmajibani* gives an authentic picture of contemporary Orissa–social, political and cultural. The analysis of events and short portrayals of different characters show Nilakantha's revolutionary attitude and dispassionate judgement. Even in emotional situations, he restrains himself from personalized sentiments and emotions. His character-sketches, though brief, are life-like and poignant. The pictures of Ram Chandra Ratha and B.V. Gupta are drawn with warmth and sympathy.

The most striking aspect of his work is its use of language. Though a Sanskrit scholar of repute, he never burdens his language with Sanskritization. Typical Oriya words and use of verbs and nouns in their proper context, give his language a taste of soil and culture. With a remarkable economy of words, he expresses delicate nuances of feelings. However, Nilakantha lacks a sense of humour. He has not consistently attained that loving closeness which all readers expect from an autobiography, though the work is undoubtedly a landmark in Oriya literature for its objectivity in treatment and its subtle use of the Oriya language.

Saurindra Nath Barik

1965 Award

Baikunthanath Patnaik

Uttarayana

Das Brothers, Cuttack; 1964; 295 pp.; Rs.6.00

"Sri Baikunthanath Patnaik (b. 1904) is a distinguished Oriya poet. Born at Baramba in the district of Cuttack, Sri Baikun-

thanath Patnaik received his education at the University of Patna and later joined the State Educational Service from where he retired as Inspector of Schools in 1959. Sri Patnaik entered the literary field during the twenties and was one of the pioneers of the modern movement known as the Sabuj group which brought to Oriya poetry a high idealism, romantic faith and a spirit of experimentation under the influence of Rabindranath Tagore. Sri Patnaik's first collection of poems published under the title *Kavya Sanchayana* established his reputation as a major Oriya poet. His poetry is marked by a deep-seated humanism and an anguish of the soul struggling to reach its goal. He has also published a drama entitled *Mukti Pathe*, and has been actively associated with the Utkal Sahitya Samaj.

The Award book, *Uttarayana*, is an impressive collection of poems of this veteran poet written over a long period and bears eloquent testimony to the author's sensibility and idealism. For its depth of feeling and the musical quality of its verse, the work has been hailed as an outstanding contribution to contemporary Oriya literature."

Uttarayana (North Movement), a collection of the poet's later poems reveals not only the poet's mature thoughts and a detached mind but also his effortless rhymes and metrics. The themes of *Uttarayana* generally cover a wide span, though apparently from the picture on the cover, one may think that they deal with love and alienation. But in the preface, the poet recalls the memories of his friends of the 'Sabuja' group and recollects the transformation made in the minds of the 'greens', the young spirits. In a touching song, the poet tells how every morning the bright sun, the humming bees and countless blooming flowers steal the despair out of his life. The poet sings not for his own, but for all.

The collection contains 110 poems which are grouped in different sections, such as 'To the Friends', 'Salutes to the Sainta', 'Dream of the Green', 'Of Moments', 'Of Spring', etc. Some of his well known poems written earlier are also included in the book. One such poem is "Mruttika Darsan", written on the death of his child.

In sensual perception and emotive language *Uttarayana* is considered a significant collection in modern Oriya poetry. The poet, born in our age of turmoil, tries to live beyond the frontiers of sorrow

and despair in quiet grace and tranquillity and therein probably lies the greatest significance of *Uttarayana*.

Narendranath Mishra

1966 Award

Godavarish Mahapatra

Banka O Sidha

Das Bothers, Cuttack; 1964; 256 pp.; Rs. 6.00

"The late Godavarish Mahapatra (1898-1965) was a distinguished Oriya poet and author. Born in a rural family of deep religious and poetic sensibilities in the district of Puri, Sri Godavarish began composing verses even as a child and wrote his famous poem on *Banapura* while at school. The poem which evoked the charm and style of the late Radhanath Rai, pioneer of modern Oriya poetry, attracted the attention of Utkalamani Gopabandhu Das, the great Oriya leader, under whose influence Sri Godavarish dedicated his life to the service of his people and his country. He joined the famous Satyabadi school and was drawn into the current of the national patriotic movement sweeping Orissa at the time. He took to journalism and used his powerful pen to voice the sentiments and urges of his people. He never ceased to be creative and enriched almost all genres of literature by his virility and vigour. His works which number more than fifty include novels, short stories, poems, essays, criticism, biographies, besides satires and writings for children in which he excelled. His writings have a remarkable blending of lucidity, humour and patriotism and bear testimony to his restless spirit.

The Award book, *Banka O Sidha*, is the last collection of his poems on various topics. For their innate humanity and their exquisite form the work has been hailed as an outstanding contribution to contemporary Oriya literature."

Banka O Sidha contains 128 poems. About the poems of *Banka O Sidha* the poet himself writes: "I have tried to give a shape to various national and social problems which I had to face in the course of my daily life As my personal experiences, emotions and moods were tortured in the wholeness of national life, innumerable shocks, cruel reactions and mocking events agitated my heart and led me to give a voice to them as best as I could." In fact, the poems of *Banka O Sidha* can be grouped as per the poet's attitudes and moods. First of all, there are poems with patriotic feelings, that is, the poems that portray the poet's disgust at the present distress of the people as against an implied context of past glory and power. Secondly, there are poems that portray personal sentiments as well as pity and sympathy in a sentimental way for distressed people. Thirdly, there are poems on leaders, and freedom fighters, who in spite of their work and character have been subsequently forgotten by people. The poems show the poet's distress and anger. Fourthly, there are poems that directly refer to contemporary political situations, particularly in the years from 1955 to 1962, mainly in Orissa, and convey the moods of distress, disgust and anger in a general satirical structure. A particularly interesting poem in this group is "Nira Bohu Asuchi" (The Young Bridegrooms) which is an introduction of Anchal administration in Orissa in 1955 and which is written in the form of an ancient Oriya poem welcoming the new young bride to the village with a caution that there are too many greedy eyes around to molest and deflower her. The fifth and the strongest group of poems are those that deal with contemporary social situations in a mood of strong disapproval and disgust with attitudes of satire that range from mild irony to devastating satire. Some good examples are "Nailen Nari" (Nylon Woman), "Bidaya Chauki" (Farewell Chair), "Janara" (A Prayer), "Garbhapata" (Abortion), "Radio Bibha" (Radio Marriage), "Photchasa" (Photo Cultivation) , "Mandia" (Black Gram), etc. Two particularly interesting poems may be noted in this connection. They are "Gasta Program" (A Tour Programme) and "Gadhastaba" (A Hymn to Ass). In the former, the original reference is to the famous declaration in the *Gita* that God will visit the earth from age to age to establish 'dharma'. Today God visits, but not in his own transcendental form, but in the forms of M.L.A's, ministers, officers and village Sarpanchas to promote lies, deception and *adharma*. Similarly, in the second poem, the ass is figured as the most tolerant though most

tortured creature on earth, and hence the hymn. It carries all debris of civilization and to that extent it is the waking sentinel of truth. The poem has a strong undertone of irony and in general it is a devastating satire on the functioning of present day man which is steeped in lies and untruth. Besides these, the poems in *Banka O Sidha* which are in a conversational and colloquial style give Godavarish Mahapatra recognition and respect as the greatest satirical poet of modern Oriya literature.

Jatindra Mohan Mohanty

1967 Award

Suryanarayan Das

Odiya Sahityara Itihas

Grantha Mandir, Cuttack; 1963; 718 pp; Rs. 14.00

"Sri Suryanarayan Das (b. 1908) is a distinguished scholar and author. Born in the village Dasarathpur in Ganjam district, Sri Das had his early education at Parlakhemundi. Later he joined the Maharaja's College, Vizianagaram, and received his degree of Master of Arts from the Utkal University. True to the scholarly tradition of his family, Sri Das has been collecting and studying old manuscripts and inscriptions over a number of years. He was one of the founders of the Utkal Journalists' Association and has been actively associated with several expert bodies set up by the state of Orissa for the compilation of administrative terminology and the history of the Freedom Movement.

A man of simple habits and dedicated scholarship, Sri Das has been held in high esteem by the people and intelligentsia of Orissa. He has published more than thirty works on various topics of historical research, and has also written profusely about the cultural and literary achievements of his people.

The Award book, *Odiya Sahityara Itihas*, is an exhausive account of the growth and development of Oriya literature from its beginning to the close of the medieval age. A product of devoted and incessant labour spread over three decades,

it runs into three large volumes, the third and the last volume having been published in 1966. For its broad vision and wide sweep, its objective appraisal of various trends and its lucid prose style it has been hailed as an outstanding contribution to contemporary Oriya literature."

Odiya Sahityara Itihas, in four volumes, is the first comprehensive history of Oriya literature, a serious work and it testifies the quality of a mind which is at once meticulous and explorative.

The beginnings of Oriya literature are traced to the fourteenth century, and for the last 600 years it has grown through mutually complementary as well as independent directions. Oriya literature reflected the social life grew through the periods of unrest and uncertainty. They are relatively the major figures prior to modern times, such as Sarala Balaram Dinakrushna, Upendra, Kabisurya, Gopalkrushna, Bhima Bhoi, etc. in a way, in their different styles, mirrored the changes. Das's book, which chronologically comes up to modern times, is both involved in its response and competency in its delineation of complex aspects of Oriya literature.

Odiya Sahityara Itihas is a thorough going book. Its greatest strength lies in its details on the one hand and on the other, the system and clarity with which these details have been organised. There are references to socio-political-religious background as well as the extent to which these factors have influenced various literary productions. At the same time, there are discussions about changes in language style as well as comparative estimates among authors. There are also biographical accounts and references to controversies wherever they exist, along with references to whatever the authors have to say about themselves in their books. Finally, there are accounts, chronologically as far as possible, and in all details, of the various works along with profuse illustrations from the text and with necessary analysis and commentary as guide lines to the readers. All these add to project an almost complete account of the author under discussion based on almost up-to-date and non-controversial findings and research. Two good examples are the critical accounts given of Dinakrushna Das and Upendra Bhanja–the two most important Oriya poets of early eighteenth century, and the latter particularly was a major poet who initiated completely new trends which were followed by hundreds of subsequent poets. Dinakrushna has been given about 150 pages, and Upendra about

600 pages. Even minor and comparatively less important writers have been discussed in the same format and with respect and difference.

Das's book is a comprehensive work, and also a pioneering one. Das was not strictly an academic scholar. But his book has acted as a model for academics engaged in charting the history of Oriya Literature.

Jatindra Mohan Mohanty

1969 Award

Surendra Mohanty

Nila Saila

Cuttack Students Stores, Cuttack; 1968; 514 pp; Rs 15.00

"Sri Surendra Mohanty (b. 1922) is a distinguished novelist, scholar and author. Born in village Purusottampur in Cuttack district, Sri Mohanty's academic education was cut short by his expulsion from the Ravenshaw College for active participation in the Quit India Movement. Sri Mohanty took to journalism and edited *Janata*, a weekly, from 1946 to 1952, and *Ganatantra*, a daily, from 1956 to 1962, and is at present editor of *Kalinga*, a daily.

Sri Mohanty's first literary venture was a play, *Purathivir Aloka,* which won for him an award from the Mayurbhanj Janmachab Samiti in 1945. But he soon found that the medium of short story and novel was more to his liking and temperament. His very first short stories were hailed as a new landmark in Oriya literature, and in 1959 the Orissa Sahitya Akademi Award was conferred on him for his collection of short stories, *Sabuja Patra O Dhusar Golap. Andha Diganta,* his first novel, too, was awarded the Orissa Sahitya Akademi Award in 1966. Novelist and short story writer, playwright and biographer, historian of literature and a journalist of distinction, Sri Mohanty has received several honours, and was a Member of Parliament from 1952 to 1962.

> The Award book, *Nila Saila*, is a historical novel dealing with the story of the famous temple of Jagannath at Puri. For its catholicity of approach and for its vast galaxy of characters the work has been hailed as an outstanding contribution to contemporary Oriya literature."

Mohanty is an important modern Oriya novelist and *Nila Sailà* an important novel, is a significant contribution to the tradition of historical novels in Orissa which had began with Fakirmohan Senapati in the later part of the nineteenth century. Thus it may be said that the novel is both a fine documentation of the lines it portrays as well on an account of human factor that may be in clash with each other at any point of time irrespective of the past, present and future.

The novel *Nila Saila* attempts to tell a story of heroism in the history of Orissa in the eighteenth century when it was under the oppressive rule of the later Mughals, and the main concern of the rulers was to extort as much as they could from the 'infidels' to replenish their coffers in Murshidabad and Delhi. The central figure is Raja Ramachandra Deb of Khurdah, who was obliged under duress to embrace Islam and marry the sister of the Naib-nazim Taki Khan, but strove at great personal sacrifice to save the deity that is, Lord Jagannath of Puri, from the clutches of the bigoted rulers. For, was he not after all the servant of the Lord in the racial tradition? And how could anything happen to the deity, who was the soul-image of the Oriya people? Thus the heroism of the supposedly renegade Raja gave expression to an upsurge, patriotic more than religious, to protect the Lord and the national honour. It is in this unique perception of the Oriya ethos which persists till today that the novel can be considered an outstanding contribution to Indian literature. In this book, one does not have to look for subtleties in human thought and conduct, and even nature does not exist except in pathetic fallacies. We are fascinated by the way the Lord comes alive in numerous rituals including Rathajatra (car festival) described in authentic detail, and in the outpourings of intense love, even anger of his people. That the narrative does not end in triumph is a tragedy. The fate of the deity spirited away in an island in the midst of Chilika lake remains uncertain. The Raja looks upon the lake as a "blue desert" and asks himself repeatedly where do I go from here? The

author seems to suggest that there is no end to man's search for a spiritual centre, and we cannot agree more.

Kishori Charan Das

1970 Award

Binod Chandra Nayak

Sarisrupa

Lark Books, Cuttack; 1969; 100 pp.; Rs. 3.00

"Sri Binod Chandra Nayak (b. 1917) is a distinguished poet and litterateur in Oriya. Born at Telipali in the district of Sundergarh, Sri Nayak received his degree of M.A. in English literature from Patna University in 1943. Later on he obtained the degree of M.A. in Oriya from the Utkal University in 1951. After finishing his studies he joined the educational service of the Orissa State where he has successfully worked on a number of posts. At present he is working as the Secretary of the Sahitya, the Sangeet Natak and the Lalit Kala Akademies of his State.

Sri Nayak took to writing poetry while still a student and his first collection of poems *Haimantee* was published in 1933 when he was only 16. The freshness of outlook and the richness of imagination promised by these poems were duly fulfilled by the collection of poems that followed at almost regular intervals. Sri Nayak has now six published collections of poems to his credit besides a long poem and a lyrical drama.

The Award book, *Sarisrupa*, is his fourth collection of poems first published in 1969. For its wide poetic range and sensitive portrayal of human emotions, the work has been hailed as an outstanding contribution to contemporary Oriya literature."

Sarisrupa (The Reptile) by Binod Chandra Nayak which was published in 1970, was the fifth published volume of Nayak, the first being *Nila Chandrara Upatyaka* (The Valley of Blue Moon) which was published in 1951 and made an immediate impact on poetry lovers

in Orissa. Nayak has other volumes subsequent to *Sarisrupa*, and today he is reckoned with respect among the senior poets of Orissa. In fact in the fifties Nayak's poetry provided a link between the earlier romantic and 'green' poetry of the thirties and forties and the New Poetry that was emerging in the Oriya literature in the fifties. In this respect Nayak's poetic achievement is comparable to that of Sachi Raut Ray (born 1916) who provided this link more eloquently and successfully.

Sarisrupa contains sixty-five poems, with the title-poem coming at the end. The poems are on a variety of topics such as, "Anupam Silong" (Uniquely Beautiful Shillong), "Eka Nirjana Mail Khunta" (A Lonely Mile Marker), "Sapa Dekha" (To See a Snake), "Nagapheni" (Cactus), "Bhadaghar" (The Rented House), "Phalguna Pare" (After the Spring), "Bharatiya Bimanbahini" (Indian Air Force), etc. The have also more than one trend. Thus there is a longing for the distance, both in time and space, as well as an involvement with here and now. Secondly, tender romantic emotions are as much evident as a concern for reality and naked factors of life. Then there is quick response to nature and nature's 'beauty' along with a contemplative mood meditating on man's destiny and inevitable decay of life, as well as on whatever else is permanent and eternal in the process of living. Most of the poems are short compositions, combination of many moods, in an atmosphere of music and sensuousness. A good example is the title poem. There are two references. The first relates to a chance encounter with a youthful woman and the consequent sexual union, almost animal like, on a river bank, in a coffee plantation. The second is a contemplation of the action: "The clouds float over the distant barley field/And I ask/ Where does it end?/ What happens to the foetus that takes shape now? Will a superman appear?" But the poem does not come to any conclusion. The naked youthful body does not provoke passion any more. It brings recognition and respect–"That naked, youthful body/I bow to it/That is bright, that is eternal/As clean as the white moon in the sky."

The new Oriya poetry in the fifties and in the subsequent decades brought in complex attitudes and complex layers of feelings. Nayak's poetry has a fine clarity as well as a sensitive old-world charm. It satisfies in the way all good poems satisfy.

Jatindra Mohan Mohanty

1971 Award

Manoranjan Das

Aranya Fasal

Lark Books, Cuttack; 1970; 125 pp.; Rs. 5.50

"Sri Manoranjan Das (b. 1921) is a distinguished author and playwright in Oriya. Born in a village of the Cuttack district, he graduated in Arts and Law from Ravenshaw College. After practising at the Bar for a few years, he joined the All India Radio, Cuttack, where he is now working as a drama producer.

Sri Manoranjan Das began writing plays at an early age. He came to limelight with his play *Jauban* in 1945. Since then he has written profusely for the theatre and the film. He has made a significant contribution to experimental stage in Orissa, and has also won the Orissa State Sahitya Akademi award for his collection of short plays.

The Award book, *Aranya Fasal* is his latest full-length play first published in 1970. It is in the nature of an absurd play commenting on the incongruities of modern life. For its psychological insight and bold experimentation the work has been hailed as an outstanding contribution to contemporary Oriya literature."

Aranya Fasal has five main characters, two couples–a teacher of Philosophy and his wife, a businessman and his wife–and a young man, supposed to be an 'adventurer', prospecting for 'gold'. The location is a remote dak-bungalow, in the midst of a forest, where the two couples have gone for a weekend picnic as well as, at least for the businessman, in search of 'big games'. They are joined by the young man accidentally. The additional character is the caretaker of the dak-bungalow who has a pet goat. The main characters are city-bred and are socially known to each other. Therefore, large portions of their conversation tend to become the usual social talk, related to their habits, manners, desires, etc. Then there are arrangements for the picnic, as well as preparations for the hunt of 'big games' at night. Then again there is love-talk and reminiscences, particularly between two characters who have known each other

from their college days. These different strands have built up the necessary frame as also gone to provide a generally complex patterning to the themes. Thus, at one level the characters try to establish their identities under conflict with one another. At another level they try to communicate and understand each other. At still another level the desires tend to become actions where some try to hunt for 'big game' and others go in search of 'gold'. All these fail–no identity was established, no communication was achieved and the actions end in dismal failures. Men's actions are symbolically projected by the goat, who continues to bleat and finally gets killed to become man's meat. Even when characters talk, it is all reduced to half utterances and monosyllables.

Manoranjan is the most important dramatist today in Orissa. During his long career, beginning from the mid-forties, he has again and again responded to the change in taste and sensibility, and to that extent not only has created new drama again and again, but has continuously provided leadership to the growth of modern drama in Orissa. *Aranya Fasal* was not only a new play in Manoranjan's total oeuvre, but it initiated a whole series of new plays by other dramatists, and has, since 1970, remained as one of the most important modern plays in Orissa.

Jatindra Mohan Mohanty

1972 Award

Manoj Das

Manojdasank Katha O Kahini

Friends Publishers, Cuttack; 1969; 400 pp.; Rs. 15.00

"Sri Manoj Das (b. 1934) was born at Sankhari, a village on the sea-coast of Orissa. Sri Manoj Das received his higher education at Utkal University and became a lecturer in English literature at Cuttack. In 1963 he joined Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry as a teacher.

Starting his literary career in his student days, Sri Manoj Das has a number of published works to his credit in Oriya

and English which include poems and travelogues besides short stories which is his forte. He is also the founder editor of the literary journal, *Diganta*, which played an important role in promoting new writing in Oriya. Many of his short stories have been translated into other Indian and foreign languages. He received the Orissa Sahitya Akademi Award in 1965 and the Prajatantra Vishuv Milan Award in 1970.

The Award book, *Manojdasank Katha O Kahini*, is a representative collection of his short stories, first published in 1971. Based on characters drawn from various walks of life, the work is a variegated album of contemporary society. For its universal appeal and powerful use of language, it has been hailed as an outstanding contribution to contemporary Oriya literature."

Manojdasank Katha O Kahini is an important collection, containing 57 stories with references to a variety of situations. Thus, some of the stories have titles as varied as "Billi" (Cat), "Kua" (Wall), "Upagraha" (Satellite), "Bagha" (Tiger), "Bannya" (Blood), "Mahamboti" (Candle), "Manusya Market Sambad" (Man-Monkey Tale) and "Bhujakothire Ek Rasi" (A Night in a Haunted House), etc. The stories have in general a genial and humourous structure, but deep inside, they have subtle ironical attitudes, particularly against lies and hypocrisy that have started becoming an 'essential' part of our character in everyday life. Though apparently entertaining, the stories have a sharp point of view, and together they constitute serious contemplations about life.

Some examples may be cited. The first story in the collection entitled "Apahruta Topira Rahasya" (The Mystery of the Stolen Cap) has a humorous situation in the sense that the cap of a minister was taken away by a monkey who thought it to be a play-thing. But the situation, seen through the innocence of a child, develops sinister implications when the outlook of a child is superseded by the understanding of an adult, and the surface veneer of humour is broken to provide an insight into the hypocrisy and deception of man. Similarly, in the second story entitled "Bihanga" (Birds), the last member of an aristocratic family, an expert hunter, suddenly realizes how his love for hunting birds, is a cruel pastime and in his desire to be as free as birds, he tries to achieve his freedom through freeing his caged tiger, at the end of which both he himself

and the tiger lose their lives, as other people failed to understand this sudden desire for freedom and take it as a common incident of a tiger hunting a man. The story has light, entertaining humour but ultimately the attention is focussed on the structure of deception through which man basically lives. In the third story entitled "Pratyabartan" (Return), a famous psychiatrist, after long years of dedicated work in a research institute which he had built up in a distant city, comes to his town for rest and to serve his own people only to find that he has become a misfit because of his capacity to see into truth. He returns to his institute as a broken man with a suspicion that he has probably become ill.

Das's stories have a neat structure. They relax the mind as well as provoke it, and at the same time they suggest ways in which one should assess the ways of life–that is, both with involvement and detachment, both with sympathy and understanding as well as with a capacity to lash out at errors and aberrations, lies and untruth. In fact, *Manojdasank Katha O Kahini* adds a powerful, fresh voice to modern Oriya fiction which has otherwise a rich and complex structure.

Jatindra Mohan Mohanty

1973 Award

Guru Prasad Mohanty

Samudra Snana

Lark Books, Cuttack; 1970; 74 pp.; Rs. 3.00

"Educated at Cuttack, Sri G.P. Mohanty (b. 1924) joined the Orissa Educational Service in 1947 as a Lecturer in English. He has also worked as a Commander of an N.C.C. Battalion for a term of five years. At present he is posted as Deputy Director of Public Instruction for Higher Education in the Directorate of Education, Orissa.

> The Award book, *Samudra Snana*, is the first independent collection of his poems, published in 1970. The poems included in this volume have ushered in a new era in the development of Oriya poetry and represent the first bold response to the complex reality of the times. For its sincere quest of new values and for its deep poetic insight, the work has been hailed as an outstanding contribution to contemporary Oriya literature."

Samudra Snana (Sea Bathing) is an outstanding contribution to modern Oriya poetry. This collections contains 19 poems of which the first ten deal with love. The mood throughout is ironic. Love in these poems is postulated as a complex of feelings and ideas, and it serves as the occasion for the poet's meditation on process and reality. In "Priya Bandhabi" (Dear Friend) for instance, the speaker invites his beloved to come to him on a moonlit night, but he also notes that the moon is tired and sick and that his own mind is assailed with questions and doubts. The invitation ends with the highly suggestive image of the burial of the two lovers by time which is described as sterile, illogical and irresistible.

The poems like "Harekrushna Das I and II", "Picnic", and "Kalapurusha" (The Great Hunter) have as their theme, the decay of human civilisation in our times. In "Kalapurusha", the longest and probably the most complicated poem in the collection, this sense of human inadequacy is dramatised in terms of situations some of which take the reader's mind to T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*. In "Chhutira Khara" (The Holiday Sun), "Sidhua" and "Keun Ghash Keun Balichara" (Which Grass which Sands) the poet turns his attention from the city to the village. These poems contain some of the finest descriptions in Oriya poetry of the natural beauty of rural Orissa. The sequence of the ten sonnets communicating feelings of love and desolation is an example of the poet's consummate craftsmanship.

One of the chief appeals of Mohanty's poetry lies in its lyricism, its pictorial quality and its verbal melody. Few modern Oriya poets have composed lines of so much evocative charm and beauty as one finds in these poems.

S.K. Mishra

1974 Award

Sitakant Mahapatra

Sabdar Akash

Cuttack Students Stores, Cuttack; 1971; 113 pp.; Rs. 6.00

> "Sri Sitakant Mahapatra, distinguished Oriya poet, was born in 1937, educated at Utkal, Allahabad and Cambridge Universities and is presently an I.A.S. Officer. He has published three anthologies of tribal poetry. He has travelled widely. His poems are translated into English, French, German and Danish.
>
> *Sabdar Akash* is considered an outstanding contribution to Oriya poetry for its mythical framework and powerful language."

Sabdar Akash (The Sky of Words), by Sitakant Mahapatra, contains 35 poems. In these, Mahapatra continues his earlier important trend, of integrating myth or the universality of meaning which a myth provides, with the individual poetic vision. Compared to the poems of the earlier volumes, these have developed a newer and deeper understanding of life's complexity, richness and profundity in a way rarely matched in Oriya poetry to-day. This understanding can be seen from the very first poem of the present book. In the title-poem, "Sabdar Akash", the crude noises of life are heard along with a fine, subtle tune generated by the movement of creative words and the final perception is one of illumination–'wordless', 'echoless', 'shapeless' and 'colourless'.

The title of the book *Sabdar Akash* is indicative of the poet's continuing concern with words, how or to what extent the poet can realize the diverse conditions of mind and can develop an insight into the life of things, through a continuous wrestling with words. These may be external like the innumerable sarees of Draupadi that 'wrapped round her delicate body' almost to 'breathlessness', or they may be, internal, seen as emerging from the innumerable pores in the poet's body into 'light', in innumerable waves. Two favourite images of the poet in this connection are firstly, the sea–how he is drowned in the 'vast, measureless depth' of the sea of words and secondly, the sky–how he is lost in the 'vast, measureless, immensity'

of the sky of words; and the final prayer to that 'Blue God' is that if he is not granted the 'silent, lonely, cruel emptiness' then he be drowned in the 'vast, frightening mass' of the sea. As a poet Sitakant has continued to grow and develop still newer awareness after *Sabdar Akash*. But the book remains a significant work in his total oeuvre. Its emphasis on a sense of loss and decay on the one hand, and on a sense of faith and health on the other, as well as on mutually existing complications, go to provide an important comment on the complex patterns of modern existence.

Jatindra Mohan Mohanty

1975 Award

Radha Mohan Gadanayak

Surya O Andhakar

Grantha Prakashan, Cuttack; 1974; 62 pp.; Rs. 6.00

> "Sri Radha Mohan Gadanayak, distinguished Oriya poet, was born in the village of Kalandapal in Orissa. He started writing when he was a student but he joined the Indian struggle for freedom in 1929 and could resume his higher education only in 1947. He has been long associated with adult-education and the *Who's Who of Freedom Fighters* in Orissa. He also edited the Oriya monthly *Ekchakra* and was the president of Utkal Sahitya Samaj for three years. Sri Gadanayak is also a member of the General Council and the Oriya Advisory Board of the Sahitya Akademi.
>
> *Surya O Andhakar* is considered an outstanding contribution to Oriya literature for its solemn and significant adherence to Indian poetic tradition, subtlety of emotions and its rhythmic cadence."

Though *Surya O Andhakar* is a slender collection of only 24 poems, it contains some of the author's representative pieces. The poems like "Chandaka Banara Eka Taruni Baghuni" (A Young Tigress in Chandaka Forest), "Birodhabhasar Gotie Kabita" (A Poem in

Opposites) or "Nila Mastrani" (Nila, the School Mistress) are beautiful story-poems in which genre the poet excels. His collections of poems, such as *Utakalika*, and *Smaranika* bear ample testimony to his reputation as master story-teller in verse. "Tuma Lagi Augusta Pandara", (For You, the 15th of August) and "Aji Eo Rupara Jayantire" (To day, at the Celebration of the Silver Jubilee) are written in a satirical vein deploring the politicial and economic degeneration of the country after Independence. The poet pays glorious tribute to those who sacrificed their lives in the service of the people and the country in the poems, "Bastaye Chaula" (A Bag of Rice), "Sarangadhara" and "Rama Devi". The poet's deep love for nature finds expression in the beautiful country vignettes contained in the poems "Biday He Mora Mati" (Farewell to My Dear Village) and "Khola Ei Prantare" (In this Open Meadow). "Gotie Sapara Atmakatha" (The Autobiography of a Snake) is the bitter and poignant self-expression of a revolutionary poet who, like his kind, is often misunderstood by his contemporaries. *Surya O Andhakar* also contains some reflective poems of which "Dubibi Ethara" (I will Drown This Time) is a fine specimen. In a superb manner it expresses the insatiable quest of the human mind for the unknown.

Gadanayak's deft handling of words and poetic metre is evident all through his work.

Durga Charan Kuaner

1976 Award

Kishori Charan Das

Thakura Ghara

Cuttack Students Stores, Cuttack; 1975; 218 pp.; Rs. 12.00

"Sri Kishori Charan Das, distinguished Oriya short story writer, poet and essayist, was born in 1924 at Cuttack. A student of History and Law with a brilliant academic career, he joined the Indian Audit and Accounts Service in 1950, and is at present an Expert assigned to the Government of Switzerland by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation. Sri Kishori

Charan Das has been writing for the last thirty years, his forte being the short story. Five collections of his stories have been published and one of them–'Mani-Hara'–won the Orissa Sahitya Akademi award in 1976. Many of his stories have been translated into various Indian and foreign languages.

Thakura Ghara is considered an outstanding contribution to Oriya literature for its subtle interpretation of relationships, revealing analysis of human urges, flashes of irony and tenderness and sympathy."

Thakura Ghara (The Deity's Room) is Kishori Charan Das's fifth collection of stories. *Thakura Ghara* has twenty stories, and almost all the stories have one element in common, that is, a strong sense of detachment from the events narrated coupled with an equally strong ironical attitude towards life.

The title-story, the longest one in the collection, is about a dying woman, the head of the house, who ultimately does not die. But the apprehension that she is about to die, because of which her sons, daughters, and daughter-in-law have all been brought together round her bed in a state of vigil for days and nights, has led to interesting mental revelations for each–a psychological tension motivated by self-interest, pride and elation. Thus what dominates the situation is not an atmosphere of death or dying apprehensions, but a psychological complexity where desires quietly clash and reclash only to promote an attitude of mockery and irony. The Deity's Room has the power to restore a person from the clutches of death, if prayers are offered properly which probably was the case of the grand old woman. But what it seemingly does, at another level, is a throw-back to a death-like existence for the members of the house *vis-a-vis* the old woman though apparently there are feelings of happiness and relaxation. Thus this is how the youngest daughter feels–"Oh Lord! I bow to thee thousand times. You have heard my prayers. You have let my mother live.....What a fool I was. How could I think that she was going to leave us? She was only trying to frighten us. That's what she does always.... We couldn't have let her die. Who is there for us except her? What else is there? She has sucked us through. She has trodden all our hopes and desires, clipped all our wings, and in return has brought us happiness. She knows where our good lies, she knows all. She asked father to die early because he would not have been happy

if he had lived long. None of us could escape from the shackles of her love. The elder brother tried. He restlessly jumped at the sky. But could he, could he succeed?" Irony is pervasive in the structure of the story. It not only integrates the attitude with understanding but also defines the basic point of view, which relates to both the complexity and mystery of human personalities living in contact with each other.

Similarly in the first story "Rati Kukkura" (The Night Dog), the incessant barking of dogs at night, which irritates a young couple, is ultimately silenced as the dogs get killed along with human beings during a midnight encounter among rival political groups. But the dogs barked because they were on heat, a very natural thing political 'convictions' was both unnatural and self-destructive. Yet the young couple are happy that the dogs have been killed and they will no more irritate them at night. Similarly in the next story entitled "Chalanta Gadi" (Running Train) the account is from the point of view of a child, a passenger in the train, who wonders why adults are so concerned about death, which is in anyway an inevitable consequence of running time (symbolized by the running train), and not items of life which alone can bring happiness, like the child meeting her pet cat at the end of the journey.

The stories of *Thakura Ghara* have individually self-contained structures and points of view. At the same time they can be seen together projecting one attitude and one point of view which, at one level, are related to family and society, but at another level, they go beyond that to provide an insight into human psyche and existence.

Jatindra Mohan Mohanty

1977 Award

Kali Charan Patnaik

Kumbhara Chaka

Cuttack Students Stores, Cuttack; 1975; 454 pp.; Rs. 35.00

"Sri Kali Charan Patnaik, distinguished Oriya author and playwright, was born at Baramba, Orissa, in 1898 He passed

his matriculation in 1916 in Ist Division but could not pursue higher studies due to his father's death. In a creative career which spans more than six decades, he has written 40 plays and published 3 collections of poetry, 10 books on music, and edited *Ragachitra*–an illustrated 17th century palm-leaf manuscript on Indian Ragas. Sri Patnaik served as Court Musician to Gajapati Rama Chandra Dev, the Ruling Chief of Puri in 1923. He has edited magazines devoted to literature and music and is a pioneer figure in Orissa stage. He started his own gramophone disc pressing company in 1954 and has also written and directed two Oriya films. Sri Patnaik was elected a Fellow of the Sangeet Natak Akademi in 1968 and the Sambalpur University conferred upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Literature in 1975.

Kumbhara Chaka is considered an outstanding contribution to Oriya literature for its authentic depiction of socio-cultural changes in Orissa during the last seven decades, its creative perception and sensibility, and rich, poetic language."

Kumbhara Chaka (The Potter's Wheel) is an autobiography of Kali Charan Patnaik (1986-1978), the foremost dramatist, lyricist and reputed stage director of Orissa in the modern times. He wrote a number of mythological, historical and social plays which earned unprecedented popularity and brought a new lease of life to modern Oriya drama in the forties. Similarly as a lyricist he composed innumerable songs mostly in the traditional Oriya metre and rhyme, and due to his incessant efforts Orissan dance and music, particularly Odissi dance, came to be recognised as a classical dance.

Kumbhara Chaka depicts vividly his life-long devotion to the development of culture and literature of Orissa through drama, dance and music. *Kumbhara Chaka* portrays the then contemporary society of the ex-states of Orissa including the then contemporary court life. The decline of the traditional art form and the introduction of a new epoch in which the author took active part, have been vividly described in it. The story of the late Patnaik–the artist's life, passing through a series of vicissitudes and finally achieving success, has been treated with the liveliness and freshness of novels. One important part of the book is its language. It is idiomatic, and colloquial with a strong poetic flavour, and is full of out-of-the-way-terms and phrases which excite and startle the reader. *Kumbhara*

Chaka's style as well as the content together make it a very significant book published in recent years in Orissa.

Janaki Ballabha Mohanty

1978 Award

Ramakanta Rath

Saptama Ritu

Lark Books, Bhuvaneswar; 1977; 118 pp.; Rs.9.00

"Sri Ramakanta Rath, distinguished Oriya poet, was born at Cuttack, Orissa in 1934. He obtained his Master's degree in English Literature from Ravenshaw College, Cuttack in 1956 and joined the Indian Administrative Service in 1957. He has served in various capacities under the Govt. of Orissa and the Central Government and is at present Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (Department of Agriculture). Sri Rath began writing poetry while he was studying in the college but his first collection of verse *Kete Dinara* was published in 1962. Two subsequent collections *Aneka Kothari* and *Sandigdha Mrigaya* were published in 1967 and 1971 respectively. The Sahitya Akademi Award winning collection was published in 1977.

Saptama Ritu is considered an outstanding contribution to Oriya literature for its mature sensibility, compact structure, a mellow and intensely human sense of tragedy and a very competent use of the language of symbolism."

Saptama Ritu is the fourth collection of poems by Ramakanta Rath. Rath is a leading poet in the new poetry movement in Orissa, and his total poetic achievement so far has given shape and viability to this movement which few other poets have done.

Saptama Ritu contains 39 poems as well as a discussion on poetry and poet's craft by the writer in the form of an Epilogue. In this, that is, adding a critical piece to one's own poetry collection, Rath is probably the only Oriya poet, and he has done this consistently

in all this poetry collections. These discussions are full of illuminating insights and they have generally added a new dimension to Rath's total body of poetry. The title 'Saptama Ritu' is itself illuminating, which points to a time which is beyond the traditional division of 6 seasons *(Rasu)*, beginning from summer to spring (*Grishma, Varsha, Sarat, Hemanta, Sisir, Basanta*), and hence beyond that which is within the concept of time-cycle.

The first poem of the collection, entitled "Dwitiya Bichar" (Second Trial), for example, deals with a vision that comes flitting from time to time, a voice which one hears as if not heard at all, and a desire which is more manifested in its unfulfilment.

Similarly, the second poem "Chhutir Smruti" (The Memory of Holiday) also exhibits a longing for something which is apparently unattainable and comes only in a 'dream-awareness' but for which the mind always worries. The desire to attain the unattainable, and yet which appears to be within one's own power to attain, and which becomes like a silver lining in an otherwise dark cloud can be seen in many of Rath's poems.

Ramakanta's poems have a tough structure. They have both an ironic wit and controlled emotion, and the point of view is provided by a continuing tension between the two. This is particularly so in *Saptama Ritu* where the complex structure of the poems indicate an equally complex but nonetheless integrated understanding of life.

Jatindra Mohan Mohanty